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ABSTRACT

A program called Strong Families: Competent Kids was developed in response to the growing number of latchkey kids. The goals of the program are to help parents determine when their children are ready for self-care and to provide children with skills to manage self-care safely and confidently. It does not advocate that children should be left in self-care, but it does provide guidance for advance preparation that enables children to be safe, act responsibly, and feel good about themselves. The program has two components: in-school classes for children and a family workshop. This guide was designed for leaders of the family workshops. Background information about the program and a workshop agenda are provided. The remaining sections of the guide include: (1) a checklist parents can use to determine their children's readiness for self-care; (2) a list of ways parents can build their children's self-esteem; (3) a guide for making and enforcing house rules and holding family meetings; (4) strategies for reducing the level of conflict between siblings; (5) strategies for preparing children to handle peer pressure; (6) information about publicity and advertising of workshops; and (7) activities for children that can be used at the workshop. Worksheets, cartoons, and other illustrations that can be copied and used in the workshop appear throughout the guide. (GLR)

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Preparing Kids for Self-Care

STRONG FAMILIES: COMPETENT KIDS

FAMILY WORKSHOP

LEADER'S GUIDE

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STRONG FAMILIES: COMPETENT KIDS

PREPARING KIDS FOR SELF-CARE

Family Workshop - Leader's Guide

Cooperative Extension Service
Prince William County
Virginia

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT IS GIVEN TO INDIVIDUALS WHO COOPERATED IN THE PRODUCTION OF THIS GUIDE:

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VIRGINIA STATE

Welcome to the **STRONG FAMILIES: COMPETENT KIDS** program!

Professionals who work with families today know that self-care is a reality for all kids at some time and in certain situations. At a time when fewer mothers worked outside of the home and there weren't as many single-parent households, kids probably didn't take care of themselves until they were a little bit older. But, today we know that many elementary-age children are alone before and after school, on early dismissal, holiday and sick days, and while their parents make quick trips out, e.g., to the grocery store.

STRONG FAMILIES: COMPETENT KIDS was developed in response to the growing number of latchkey kids. It is not intended to endorse self-care for very young children, but rather to provide skills that will help kids feel safe and confident once they and their parents decide the time is right.

Placing a child in self-care is a very serious step. **STRONG FAMILIES: COMPETENT KIDS** helps families use their instincts and communication skills to prepare for it and stay tuned in to everyone's comfort about the self-care as time goes on.

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INTRODUCTION

The goal of the **STRONG FAMILIES: COMPETENT KIDS** program is to help parents know when their children are ready for self-care and to give kids skills to manage self-care safely and confidently.

Sponsored by the Prince William Cooperative Extension Service, STRONG FAMILIES: COMPETENT KIDS has two components: (1) in-school classes for kids, and (2) a family workshop.

Fourth graders in every county elementary school receive training through a series of four 1-hour classes. These sessions are taught by trained volunteers--in most cases, parents from that particular school. The in-school sessions include information on emergency preparedness, simple first aid, stranger safety, coping with loneliness and boredom, handling conflict with peers and siblings, preparing nutritious snacks, fire safety, and telephone skills. Students receive their own "Survival Skills Handbook," which they work through during the four sessions. They have opportunities to role play a variety of situations they could encounter while home alone. In addition, they view the movie "Better Safe Than Sorry," which deals with stranger safety.

Information for parents is provided in two ways. First, a series of four newsletters --one to correspond with each of the in-school sessions--is sent home. These sum up the material being covered in class and offer suggestions for reinforcing the material at home. More than anything, they serve to acquaint the parents with what's being taught so they can discuss it further with their children. Second, parents are encouraged to attend this evening Family Workshop, "Preparing Your Child for Self-Care".

Each school decides whether to invite parents only or whole families. The supplementary information provided in the workshop is beneficial to the children and having them at the workshop makes it easier for parents to be out on a school night. Since the four in-class sessions of STRONG FAMILIES: COMPETENT KIDS are presented for 4th graders, they and their families are usually the focus of the workshop. Some schools will opt to invite 3rd and 5th graders as well; others will issue an open invitation to the whole school. The lesson plan for the children's segment of the workshop lends itself comfortably to all elementary-age children and their siblings.

THE FAMILY WORKSHOP AGENDA

A. INTRODUCTION

Usually the local guidance counselor starts the meeting, recognizes parent volunteers, and introduces the leader who will conduct the workshop. The leader then explains why the schools and your agency (Cooperative Extension, for example) are cooperating in this program:

1. The number of young children in self-care, in the absence of quality, accessible before and after school childcare for school-aged children, has been clearly defined in the local community as an issue of significant concern.
2. Family workshops like this support and promote the stability of family life.
3. Stable families contribute to the quality of life in the local community.
4. Preparation/prevention is always the most wise way to deal with potentially dangerous situations. All children are "at risk," and even more dramatically when they are left to fend for themselves in situations they are not prepared to handle.
5. These are important lessons for all children and their families because every child is given the responsibility of self-care eventually.

B. CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY

After this general introduction, the children will go with the guidance counselor to another room to view the 30 minute video "Home Alone: A Kid's Guide To Playing It Safe When On Their Own". This video, which features Malcolm-Jamal Warner (Theo of the Cosby Show), is suitable for all ages. The guidance counselor works with the kids for a total of 45 minutes. During that time, they will watch the video, have some discussion, and do some worksheets if the guidance counselor wants to use them.

C. PARENT INFORMATION

1. After the children leave, the leader provides the following background information:

    a. <u>STRONG FAMILIES: COMPETENT KIDS in no way advocates that children should be left in self-care</u>! Neither can anyone else tell a parent when their child is ready. However, many children do take care of themselves and their siblings. Whenever that happens, advance preparation can enable children to be safe, act responsibly, and feel good about themselves.

b. **This program is for all children left alone at anytime**. When we hear the term "latchkey" today, we usually think of youngsters who supervise themselves and/or siblings after school until parent(s) return home from work. In STRONG FAMILIES: COMPETENT KIDS, we prefer to say "children in self-care" since the program is geared towards a wide audience that includes any child left alone, such as:

-- for 10 minutes while a parent runs an errand;
-- for a day on occasion (e.g. a school holiday or when the child is mildly ill); or
-- on a regular basis, everyday, before and/or after school.

c. **Our families are changing**. In Prince William County, Virginia, for example, according to the 1980 census, we know that 67% of the households are dual-earner and 70% of those who are employed leave the county to work, which means a commute of 30-120 minutes each way. There is a rising number of single-parent households and the high cost of living leaves more than half of families economically fragile, i.e. making a good wage and managing the bills month-to-month but dangerously susceptible to any crisis. The Department of Labor speculates that there are as few as 3% of "traditional" families today: two-parent, with the father employed outside of the home and the mother as homemaker. There are many contributing factors--cost not the least among them--which creates the reality that there are many children in self-care.

2. Now the leader discusses chapters one through five of this guide, passing out copies of the hand-outs and whatever supplementary material the leader has prepared. These chapters cover:

A CHECKLIST: Is your child ready for self-care?
SELF-ESTEEM: Helping children feel good about themselves.
HOUSE RULES: Making rules that will be followed.
SIBLINGS: Planning to leave more than one child in self-care.
FRIENDS: Preparing children to handle peer pressure.

What follows in this book is a development of the curriculum, followed by the materials used to supplement each point on the agenda for the FAMILY WORKSHOP. This format has been applauded as providing very helpful and realistic information for parents who are considering carefully their children's readiness for self-care.

Everything contained in this book can be copied and used by you. The supplementary handouts can be used for your own family workshop. Inasmuch as it is possible, we always appreciate acknowledgement of Extension's role in developing the STRONG FAMILIES: COMPETENT KIDS program.

A CHECKLIST 1

Is Your Child Ready for Self-Care?

The decision to let children take care of themselves is a serious and sometimes scary one . . . for children and for parents. No one knows their children like parents do, so they are the best ones to make the decision. But parents are often uncertain about what things they need to consider in making the decision--they want guidelines to help them know when self-care is okay.

Working through this checklist will help parents see their children's strengths and weaknesses and develop a clearer picture of how ready they are. Taking the time to think about the demands of self-care in advance--and talking with their children about it--will give both parents and children the confidence and the skills necessary to make self-care a safe, happy experience.

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IS YOUR CHILD READY FOR SELF-CARE?

Parents may want to consider the following checklist when they are deciding whether or not their children are ready to stay alone.

YES	NO		
___	___	AGE	Do you consider your child old enough to stay at home alone?
___	___	EMOTIONAL MATURITY	Do you think your child is mature enough to handle a self-care situation?
___	___	DESIRE	Has your child ever mentioned that he would like to try self-care?
___	___	SELF-RELIANCE	Is your child able to complete daily tasks with little supervision and find solutions to problems that may arise in your absence?
___	___	COMMUNICATION SKILLS	Is your child able to communicate comfortably with adults?
___	___	PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP	Do you feel good about the relationship you presently have with your child?
___	___	SIBLINGS	Will your child be home with younger brothers and/or sisters?
___	___		If yes, do you feel your child is mature enough to care for younger children?
___	___		Do your children relate well enough to one another that you feel comfortable leaving them home together?

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YES	NO		
___	___	AVAILABILITY OF AN ADULT	Is there an adult living or working nearby who your child can rely on in case of an emergency?
___	___	ACCESS TO PARENTS	Can you be reached by phone while away from home?
___	___	HOME SAFETY	Is your home a safe environment for a child in self-care?
___	___	SAFETY OF NEIGHBORHOOD	Do you consider your neighborhood a safe place for a child in self-care?
___	___	HOURS IN SELF-CARE	Will your child be in self-care on a regular basis?
___	___		What length of time will he spend in self-care?
___	___	TIME OF DAY	What time of day will he be in self-care? (before or after school, evening?)

LEADER'S GUIDE TO CHECKLIST FOR PARENTS

AGE

The age of a child is certainly an important factor in determining whether self-care is appropriate, however, it should not be the only factor taken into consideration. Just because a child seems old enough to take on the responsibility of caring for himself doesn't mean he is ready to do so, or that he feels comfortable staying by himself. It is also important to check the guidelines developed by the local department of social services regarding the age requirement for children left alone.

EMOTIONAL MATURITY

A child may seem old enough to stay alone, but lack the emotional maturity necessary to handle the responsibility of self-care. If a child is afraid of the dark, complains about hearing strange noises, and is generally insecure about staying alone, he is probably not ready for self-care yet.

DESIRE

It is not recommended that a child be left alone if he indicates that he does not want to stay alone. Even when a child requests to be left alone, parents should carefully evaluate the child's readiness. Some children may be responding to pressure from peers and claim they're "too old for a baby-sitter" when in fact they do not feel ready for self-care.

SELF-RELIANCE

Self-care requires a child to "think on his feet." No matter how thoroughly parents prepare a child to stay alone, circumstances arise that require some problem-solving skills. If a child panics when a routine is broken or the unexpected occurs, parents want to wait awhile before leaving him alone.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

A child in self-care needs to be able to talk comfortably with adults, whether that be taking a phone message, talking to someone at the door, contacting his back-up person for assistance, or calling 911 in an emergency.

PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

It is especially important that there is communication between parent and child. The only way parents will know how self-care is working for their child is by what he tells them.

SIBLINGS

Parents with more than one child in self-care especially need to take into consideration the maturity level of the child who will be in charge. Taking care of a younger child (or more than one child) requires a greater degree of maturity than just self-care. How the children interact with one another is also important. Many parents report that their children actually fight and argue less when they are in self-care.

AVAILABILITY OF AN ADULT

A child in self-care should have at least two different adults he can contact in case of an emergency. This is particularly important when parents work a great distance from their home or cannot easily be reached at their work place. With the growing number of families in which both parents work outside the home, finding an available adult can be one of the biggest obstacles in designing a family's self-care plan.

ACCESS TO PARENTS

At least one parent should be able to be reached by phone. If the parent is not readily accessible by phone, there needs to be a system for reaching him in an emergency.

HOME SAFETY

A child will have more confidence about staying alone, if he feels his environment is safe. It would be good for parents to go through the house with the child and check out the safety features, such as door and window locks, outside lighting, and smoke detectors.

SAFETY OF NEIGHBORHOOD

A child will feel more comfortable alone if he views his neighborhood as safe. Parents should take into consideration the crime rate and whether neighbors can be counted on to provide assistance in an emergency.

HOURS IN SELF-CARE

The amount of time a child will be left in self-care is a very important factor. Ideally, parents should begin by leaving a child alone for short amounts of time. A child left alone regularly for several hours each day requires different skills than one left alone periodically.

TIME OF DAY

The time of day that a child will spend in self-care is also another important factor to consider. A child left in self-care before school must have a high level of maturity and responsibility to perform such morning tasks as waking up to an alarm clock, dressing and grooming, eating breakfast, and arriving at the bus or school on time. Many children feel more comfortable staying alone during daylight hours than after dark, and prefer summer to winter self-care.

SELF-ESTEEM 2

Helping Children Feel Good About Themselves

Self-esteem is the extent to which a child sees himself as capable, significant, worthy, and successful. It is his opinion of himself. How a child feels about his capabilities influences the kinds of decisions he makes.

Parents of children in self-care often ask, "How can I build my child's self-esteem when I am able to spend only limited time with him each day?" and "Will my child's self-esteem suffer because he spends time alone without me?" Certainly there is no simple answer to either of these questions. But parents can work to improve their children's feelings about themselves . . . and in the process, strengthen their relationship with them as well.

What parents provide in love, trust and encouragement is the starting point for a safe and healthy experience in self-care.

SELF-ESTEEM

What IS self-esteem any way?
Your SELF IMAGE
How you think and feel about yourself
Like, I'm smart handsome, fun?
Those are positive thoughts. The more of those you have the HIGHER your self-esteem.
Sometimes I feel ugly, boring and afraid I'll mess everything up.
Those sure are negative feelings. They LOWER your self-esteem.
Where does self-esteem come from?
It's based on all your experiences and personal relationships at HOME, at SCHOOL - - -
and with FRIENDS!

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Boost Your Child's Self-Esteem

A positive parent-child relationship is the cornerstone of a self-care situation in which children feel good about themselves and their self-care plan. Here are some ways to improve your relationship and help your child's self-image.

1. Communicate to your child that you really care about her.

Praise her participation in the self-care plan. It doesn't take much time for a warm touch, a hug or a simple "I missed you."

2. Keep the lines of communication open on a daily basis.

This can include a phone call, a note, a personal message left on a recorder, or a card in a lunch box with a joke or a special greeting.

3. Spend time alone with each child regularly--and listen.

A child who feels valued will have an easier time coping with self-care than a child who feels neglected.

4. Establish family rituals.

Try any kind of activity--ordering pizza, watching a video, making Sunday brunch--as long as the entire family participates. These activities create regularly-scheduled time for you to spend together.

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5. Explain to your child why you work and what kind of job you have.

The more your child knows, the easier it is to cope with why you are absent from home. He will view his situation more positively, telling himself, "My parent has an important job to do", rather than, "My parent doesn't want to spend time with me."

6. Take your child on a visit to your work place.

It is comforting for your child to visualize where you are when you are away from home. Travelling the distance to your work place will help him understand why you cannot come home immediately.

7. Catch your child doing something positive.

By the end of each day, a parent should be able to say at least one encouraging word to a child. A simple, "I love you", is a great start.

8. Be Reliable.

If you are going to arrive home late, call so your child doesn't worry. Don't make a habit of being late or she may assume work is more important to you than she is.

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WARM FUZZIES THAT ENCOURAGE

I missed you a lot.
It looks as if you enjoyed that.
I have confidence in your judgment.
Look how far you've come!
I love you.
I'm glad you enjoy learning.
You'll figure it out.
I am glad that you are my daughter.
What a great idea!
I like the way you tackle a problem.
I enjoyed our walk today.
It was fun shopping with you.
Thank you for coming in on time.
I like it when you tell me about your day.
That was so thoughtful.
Knowing you, I'm sure you'll do fine.
Your help made my job much easier.
That color shirt brings out your eyes.
Jane Mitchell

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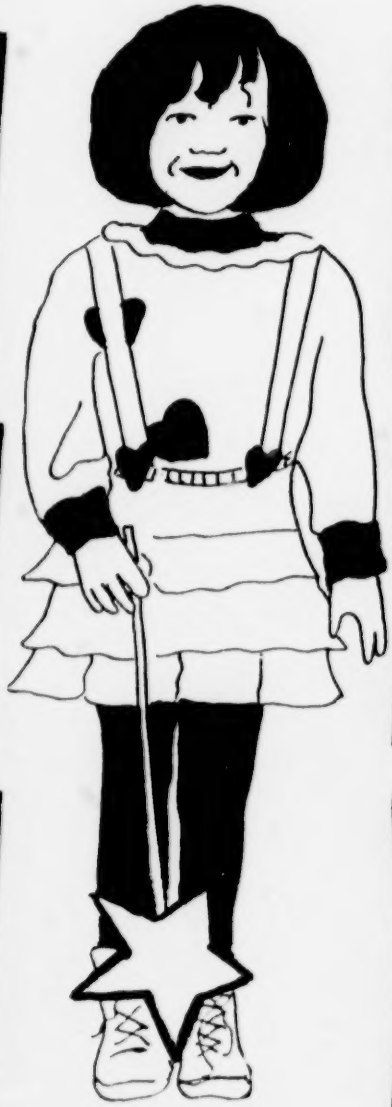

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HOUSE RULES 3

Making Rules That Will Be Followed

When the time comes for children to be left alone at home by themselves, most parents set up rules--sometimes lots of rules--to govern their children's behavior. They hope these rules will guide their children to be safe and use their time well.

Unfortunately, once self-care begins these parents usually find it difficult to enforce their rules. Since parents cannot monitor everything that goes on in their absence, they may not even know whether a rule is being followed.

Parents can feel more confident that the rules will be followed, if they enlist the support of the children right from the beginning. Advance planning and, where possible, deciding on the house rules together, provides a foundation of trust and understanding.

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MAKING RULES

KIDS UNDERSTAND AND FOLLOW
RULES THAT ARE:

1. FEW

   Make rules about important things.

2. CLEAR

   Write them down and post them.

3. NECESSARY

   Assign only needed chores/limits.

4. ENFORCEABLE

   Build in consequences.

5. FLEXIBLE

   Allow for growth and change.

6. MADE WITH THEIR INPUT

   Decide rules with your kids.

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LEADER'S GUIDE TO MAKING RULES

1. **Keep the number of rules to a minimum.** When there are too many rules, kids may feel overwhelmed and both kids and parents tend to forget them. You can't enforce rules you don't remember. Parents must decide what is a priority or no-give issue (e.g. safety) and build that into a rule. Some other minor matters can be the kids' responsibility and don't require a rule.

2. **State the rules clearly, specifically and in a positive manner.** Parents should give every family member a copy or post them in an often-visited place such as the kitchen. They should state a rule using do rather than don't.

3. **If the rule involves a task, make it a necessary one and appropriate for the child.** It should make sense to the child how the task contributes to running the family home. Parents are wise to train a child adequately before assigning a task. When kids understand what is wanted, they are more likely to produce a satisfactory result.

4. **Consequences for following or not following the rule should be spelled-out clearly and acted upon immediately.** When parents aren't present to enforce the rules, the positive or negative consequences should begin shortly after parents arrive home. If the consequences are clearly spelled-out in advance, there will be no need to nag and no excuse for it. Consequences make more sense if they are related to the task or rule. They should also be those predetermined--no more and no less--and not depend on the kind of day the parent had at work.

5. **Stay flexible.** Although rules should be consistently enforced, there are times when you need to bend. A snack policy might change on a holiday, a bedtime gets altered when grandma visits, limits on TV watching might not make as much sense when you're snowbound. Some rules should change as the child grows, others as seasons change. A rule may apply only when other siblings are around, or only when they're gone. Parents need to think about the situation and then decide on the best course. Following their parents' example, kids will learn an important skill --to analyze what is appropriate in a given situation.

6. **Encourage the child to participate in creating the rules.** Making rules together provides an opportunity for parents and children to do some communicating and get out the "real" issues. When rules are created in an atmosphere of cooperation, children will feel more willing the follow the rules. A family rule-making session may lead to planning a regular family meeting.

THE FAMILY MEETING

* A regular opportunity for everyone to be heard
* A sharing of beliefs and values, wishes and complaints, plans, questions, and suggestions
* A time to learn respectful listening and speaking
* A chance to make some decisions together
* A scheduled time to review and change decisions

Do

1. Invite everyone in the family to the meeting.
2. Have a regularly scheduled meeting time.
3. Have an agenda for the meeting.
4. Treat everyone respectfully; let everyone be heard.
5. Talk about the good things happening in the family.
6. Include planning for family fun.
7. Have a time limit for the meeting and stick to it.
8. Keep a record of decisions made and post it.

Don't

1. Meet only to handle crises.
2. Skip meetings or change times.
3. Allow one member to dominate.
4. Fail to listen to and encourage each other.
5. Focus on complaints and criticisms.
6. Meet only to give out jobs or level punishments.
7. Go beyond your set meeting time limit.
8. Fail to implement the family's decisions.

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LEADER'S GUIDE TO FAMILY MEETINGS

Many families have found that a family meeting is a good time to make rules. It creates an opportunity for everyone to come together as a unit and air grievances, worries, wishes, and triumphs. Although a family meeting is a good idea for any family at any time, it is particularly useful for families where children are in self-care. It schedules regular family time together--something every smoothly running organization does--and keeps the lines of communication open.

A family meeting does not mean that parents are bound by what their children want. But it does mean that all family members have an opportunity to be heard. Of course, there will always be "absolute" rules: guidelines, especially about safety, which are non-negotiable. There might be some other rules, however, that the children can help make. Rules that are jointly developed (or even just discussed so everyone understands why they're necessary) are more likely to be followed.

A regularly scheduled family meeting can help parents have a realistic picture of how the self-care situation is working out. While much has been written about the family meeting, it should be tailored to each individual family. It doesn't have to be run "by the book". Some meetings will ring with laughter, while others are bound to erupt in a shouting match or tears. Parents need to keep in mind that the first family meeting should be kept short. It takes practice; in most cases, family members just aren't used to communicating with one another in this way.

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BRAINSTORMING

A GOOD TECHNIQUE FOR KIDS--AND ADULTS--TO USE WHEN TRYING TO SOLVE A PROBLEM

NEEDED: Willingness to listen
Ideas to share

1. **SET THE TONE**
   Be respectful and non-judgmental. We're all working to come up with a solution.

2. **CLEARLY STATE THE PROBLEM**
   Be sure everyone understands it.

3. **ASK EVERYONE TO THINK OF ALL POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**
   No discussion or judgment at this point! Just bring out and list as many ideas as possible.

4. **GO BACK THROUGH THE LIST**
   Ask questions and provide explanations for each suggestion. Still no judgment.

5. **GROUP EVALUATES THE SUGGESTIONS IN RESPECTFUL WAY**
   Focus on those that are mutually acceptable.

REMEMBER:
In the end, not everyone can "get their way." But, if they've been listened to and participated in making the group's decision, all members will feel more cooperative about owning and implementing the solution.

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SIBLINGS 4

Planning to Leave More than One Child in Self-Care

While parents who have one child home alone are concerned about how their child will handle fears, loneliness, boredom, and peer pressure, parents leaving more than one child in self-care question whether siblings will work and play harmoniously. Fortunately, planning ahead can significantly reduce the level of conflict between siblings. Parents need to decide who will be in charge and how responsibilities will be delegated.

Because each family has unique qualities and needs, there is no one strategy that will be best for all. By examining relations among siblings in advance, however, parents can be better equipped to work with their children to prevent as many problems as possible. The Family Meeting, mentioned in Chapter 3, promotes respectful listening and sharing, and is a good forum for discussing conflicts among siblings when they do arise.

WHO'S IN CHARGE

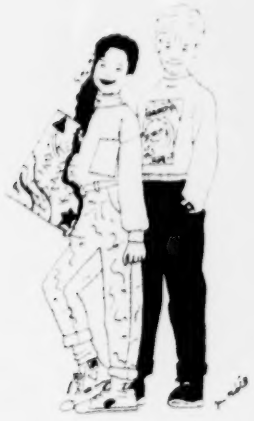
The Oldest Child

--keeps track of other children

--handles emergencies

--enforces rules

This arrangement is most successful if child in charge is 3-4 years older than the others.



-OR-

Each in Charge of Self

--is personally accountable for following house rules

--does chores and homework on his own initiative

This set-up works better if children are very close in age.

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YOU NEED TO PLAN AHEAD

1. Children fight over things like TV, food and jobs. Make a plan for these conflicts before they come up. Don't leave room for arguing. Weekly schedules or daily notes left for the children can be very helpful.

2. Be sure **each** child knows how to handle emergencies. They can't help each other in a tricky situation if only the oldest child knows what to do.

3. Whenever possible, schedule fun activities for each child, such as school clubs, sports, or music lessons. This reduces the amount of time the kids are alone together.

4. Try not to leave the kids alone any longer than you need to. Self-care is a serious job, especially for an "oldest in charge", and they need a break from their siblings.

5. **Encourage all the time! Let the children know that you feel confident they'll do a very good job of self-care. Give lots of positive attention for self-care that's going well. . . and pick up on the successful parts of less good days. Try very hard not to focus on the negative.**

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WORKSHEET FOR PARENTS AND THE CHILD "IN CHARGE"

You are doing something very important for our family. When you're "in charge" of younger children, you have a serious job. . . and we want to help you be as prepared as you can be.

Here are some ideas to try with the kids when you're "in charge":

1. **If someone's misbehaving, there's a reason.** Try to understand how they're feeling. Are they sick? Tired? Bored? Lonely? Feeling left out? After you've thought about what's wrong, here are some suggestions to try:

   _____

   _____

2. **Kids love to be appreciated and noticed.** If you give positive attention for all of the little things they do well, you'll be surprised how cooperative they'll be. Can you think of some things they do pretty well?

   _____

   _____

3. **Keep kids busy and they'll be happier.** When your little brother or sister is stirring up trouble, maybe he or she is just bored. You could try interesting them in games, puzzles, or books. What other activities might you suggest?

   _____

   _____

   _____

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4. **Try to let kids work out their own problems.** If they're fighting over the TV or a snack, or who's going to do a job, you could help by getting them to agree to a schedule or a trade. Let them work out the details--otherwise they'll feel like you're just "bossing" them.

WHAT DO THEY FIGHT ABOUT? AND WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

_____

_____

_____

REMEMBER, even parents don't always know the best thing to do to solve a problem, so be easy on yourself. Take a minute to **CALM DOWN and THINK** about what's going on . . . and then **DO THE BEST YOU CAN.**

THANK YOU FOR HELPING!

FRIENDS 5

Preparing Children to Handle Peer Pressure

Belonging to a group of friends is very important to children. But parents worry about their children's choice of friends, and about pressures they might feel to try unacceptable or dangerous activities. When children are in self-care, peer pressure is a major parental concern. Fortunately, parents can equip their children with tools to use in their relationships with friends. Children need support, understanding--and a plan.

WANTED: A GOOD FRIEND

You've just moved to a new country where people have to advertise to find friends. Write your ad. List what you're looking for in a friend.

WANTED: A Good Friend Who:

_____

_____

_____

List 5 things that people would like about you as a friend:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Who was your first friend? _____

Who is your best friend today? _____

TO HAVE A GOOD FRIEND, BE A GOOD FRIEND!

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PEER PRESSURE

What is peer pressure?
It is when people your own age try to influence how you think and act.
Sometimes that can help you- Sometimes it hurts!

To handle peer pressure, you need to know:

1. Who **you** are--and what your **values** are.

   Definition: **Values are habits, interests, and ideals; what you see as important. They are worth paying "a price for".**

You usually share your family's values. A family might believe neatness, hard work, and helping people are important. If members of the family enjoy sports and science, athletic ability and scientific achievement might become values, too.

TALK
THIS
OVER

Some of your family's values are:

_____

_____

2. How to make **your own** decisions.

   Step A: Find out what's really going on.

   Step B: Think about consequences.

   Definition: **Consequences are the good and bad results of what you do.**

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TALK
THIS
OVER

Things I do that have **consequences:**

_____

_____

_____

Step C: Decide what's right for you.
Step D: Tell others about your decision.

3. What to do in **tricky** situations.

TALK
THIS
OVER

Situations I am not sure I can handle:

_____

_____

_____

Don't let peers make decisions for you
because it's your life
and you have to live with the consequences.

Can you think of some **good** ways your friends might influence you?

_____

_____

_____

PUBLICITY 6

There's not enough that can be said or done about the need for good advertising and information to encourage parents to attend your workshop.

The daily task of trying to balance work and family life leaves parents exhausted at night and not generally anxious to attend an evening meeting. Also, experience has shown us that there is a striking variance in how parents in different school communities perceive the STRONG FAMILIES: COMPETENT KIDS program. Some are eager to learn any new and helpful information. They attend the family workshop because they see the program for what it truly is: preventive and skill-building for **all** kids and their families. Other parents feel embarrassed or guilty about leaving their kids in self-care and are unwilling to identify themselves by attending the family workshop.

The information offered in this workshop is **practical and supportive** for families. We should use every creative means we can think of to advertise it and encourage their attendance.

Early and Aggressive Publicity
Puts Your Workshop on the Family Calendar

PROMOTIONAL PIECES

Newsletter Article - Give as much lead time as you can. Run some version of the announcement as frequently as you can.

Flyer - Fill in the blanks with information about **your** program. Ask for the tear-off portion back, so you can plan your segment of the program with the kids. A packet of materials is available for anyone who can't attend, but wants information.

Clip Art - Use the top of the flyer or just the drawing (provided here in various sizes) to make posters, flyers, etc. The more visibility you give the program, the better.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

Kids' Posters - Have the students currently involved in STRONG FAMILIES: COMPETENT KIDS make posters about kids in self-care and their families. Post these around the building and display them at the family workshop.

P.A. Announcements - Keep kids thinking about the program.

Written Reminders - Notes that go home could include something like a riddle, puzzle or game.

Incentives - Some principals and guidance counselors have found creative ways to encourage kids to bring their parents to the workshops. Perhaps you have an idea!

SAMPLE NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

The STRONG FAMILIES: COMPETENT KIDS program, sponsored by Prince William Cooperative Extension, is being presented to the _____ graders here at _____. This program provides students with valuable skills that help them care for themselves when home alone. The classes are taught by _____, and cover information on handling emergencies, answering the telephone and door, establishing house rules, dealing with loneliness, boredom, and fears, getting along with brothers and sisters, peer pressure, and making nutritious snacks.

STRONG FAMILIES: COMPETENT KIDS also provides parents with important information on children in self-care. Parents receive a set of for newsletters outlining the material discussed in the classes their children attend. Parents and children are invited to attend a FAMILY WORKSHOP which is scheduled for _____. Topics to be discussed include:

- HOW DO I KNOW WHEN MY CHILD IS READY TO BE HOME ALONE?
- SETTING UP HOUSE RULES
- HANDLING CONFLICTS WITH BROTHERS AND SISTERS
- BUILDING YOUR CHILD'S SELF-ESTEEM
- HELPING YOUR CHILD DEAL WITH PEER PRESSURE

Children will see a video, "Home Alone," featuring Malcolm-Jamal Warner of "The Cosby Show," which dramatizes how self-care can be a positive experience.

(OPTIONAL) Refreshments will be served.

This workshop is open to ALL PARENTS AND CHILDREN at _____. Plan to join us!

or

This workshop is open to ALL PARENTS OF _____ GRADERS at _____. Plan to join us!

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The Award-Winning Program

STRONG FAMILIES: COMPETENT KIDS

presents a

FAMILY WORKSHOP

PREPARING KIDS FOR SELF-CARE

TOPICS FOR PARENTS

Readiness for Self-care
Setting House Rules
Sibling Conflicts
Peer Pressure
Your Child's Self-Esteem

VIDEO FOR KIDS

"Home Alone," featuring Malcolm-Jamal Warner of "The Cosby Show," dramatizes how self-care can be a positive experience.

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM BY _____.

Name:_____

Our family will attend:___. There will be ___ adults and ___ children.

We cannot attend, but would like materials on preparing children for self-care to use at home:___

FAMILY WORKSHOP

STRONG FAMILIES: COMPETENT KIDS

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CLIP ART

PREPARING KIDS FOR SELF-CARE

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MORE FOR KIDS 7

The Kids' Segment of the Family Workshop

What follows is a collection of worksheets, all of which can be duplicated, which may be used with the children at the Family Workshop. Viewing and discussion of the film, "Home Alone", most often fills very meaningfully the 45 minutes or so allotted for working with the kids. However, worksheets like these may serve a purpose in settling the group while everyone gathers, wrapping things up at the end of the discussion, or as a "family assignment" to be done at home. In particular, we recommend the sheet which directs designing a family shield for the t-shirt that says, "I belong to a STRONG FAMILY". The project can be a lot of fun for the whole family and opens the door for the communication we've been saying is so important.

Solve the Secret Code to find tips that will help you be safe. To solve the code, match the numbers that are in the boxes with the letters in the Secret Code wheel. For example, if the number is 9, the letter is R.

When you are home alone:

15-12-24-16 26-15-15 23-12-12-9-8

26-13-23 4-18-13-23-12-4-8. 23-12

13-12-7 12-11-22-13 7-19-22

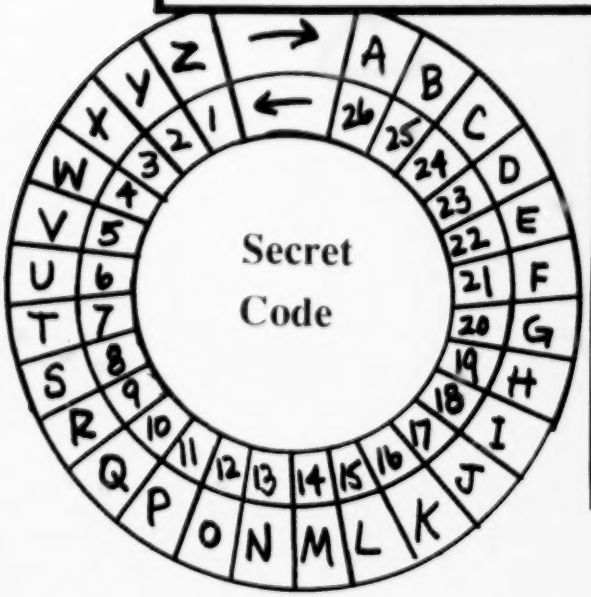
23-12-12-9 21-12-9 26-13-2-12-13-22.

23-12 13-12-7 7-22-15-15

26-13-2-12-13-22 12-5-22-9 7-19-22

11-19-12-13-22 7-19-26-7 2-12-6

26-9-22 26-15-12-13-22.



When you are home alone:

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Have fun solving the mystery!

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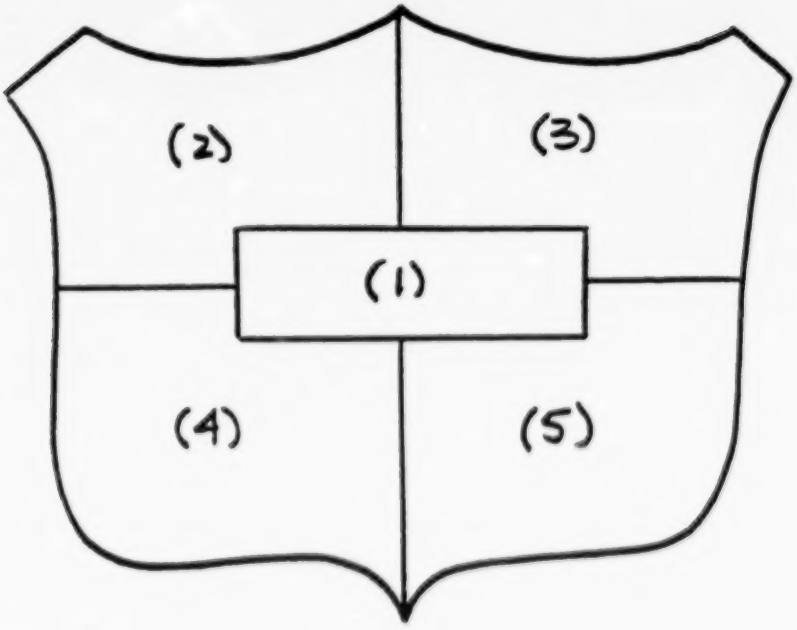
DIRECTIONS FOR FILLING IN YOUR FAMILY SHIELD:

*using words or drawings or symbols



(1) the family's LAST name

(2) "picture" of my family (can be stick figures...)

(3) our family's favorite season or holiday (e.g. Jack-O-Lantern)

(4) things we do best as a family (e.g. camping/tent)

(5) a family of animals we are like... (e.g. lions)

WHO TO CALL???

You go outside to get the newspaper. The wind blows the door shut. Your key is inside.

Is this an emergency? YES NO

What should you do? _____

Who should you call? _____

Your sister slips and falls. She gets knocked out and does not answer when you talk to her.

Is this an emergency? YES NO

What should you do? _____

Who should you call? _____

You are cutting with scissors. You cut your finger and it bleeds a little bit.

Is this an emergency? YES NO

What should you do? _____

Who should you call? _____

You are sitting watching TV and smell smoke. You look around the room but do not see where it is coming from.

Is this an emergency? YES NO

What should you do? _____

Who should you call? _____

On your way home a teenager follows you to your house. You do not talk to him but he is still outside watching the house after you get inside.

Is this an emergency? YES NO

What should you do? _____

Who should you call? _____

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How many words can you find?

LATCHKEY	COMPETENT
hat	come

EMERGENCY	RESPONSIBLE
gem	peel

Do you know what these words mean?

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